

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3848
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT AU PRINCE 0222

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, HA
SUBJECT: VISIT TO HAITI OF CONGRESSMAN CHARLES RANGEL

1. SUMMARY: GOH SPONSORED VISIT TO HAITI OF CONGRESSMAN RANGEL (D.-N.Y.) 13-17 JANUARY IN APPARENT EFFORT TO WIN CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND GREATER UNDERSTANDING FOR DOMESTIC CONDITIONS, NOTABLY IN HUMAN RIGHTS AREA. IN VISIT'S HIGHLIGHT, CONGRESSMAN RANGEL HAD LENGTHY PRIVATE TALK WITH PRESIDENT. PRESIDENT GAVE NATIONALIST APOLOGIA, EXPRESSED CONCERN AT INADEQUATE U.S. ASSISTANCE RELATIVE TO THAT PROVIDED DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, AND STRESSED SECURITY LIMITS TO FLEXIBILITY GOH COULD SHOW ON HUMAN RIGHTS. CONGRESSMAN INSISTED THAT HIS INTEREST AND THAT OF BLACK CAUCUS WOULD REQUIRE REAL GOH PROGRESS IN HUMAN RIGHTS. VISIT SERVED FURTHER TO EDUCATE GOH IN STRENGTH OF U.S. INTERESTS, AND AT SAME TIME OPENED UP ONE MORE GOH CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION WITH U.S. END SUMMARY.

2. GOH SPONSORED VISIT. CODEL RANGEL DEPARTED 17 JANUARY AT END OF FIVE DAY VISIT THAT GOH HOSTED IN APPARENT EFFORT A) TO ESTABLISH BRIDGEHEAD WITH BLACK CAUCUS AND B) TO DEVELOP SUPPORT FOR CONTINUED U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING OF REALITIES GOVERNING ITS HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES. GOH PRETENDED VISIT WAS PRIVATE AND UNOFFICIAL, CONFIDENTIAL

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GOING TO EXTENT OF INVITING CONGRESSMAN RANGEL, ADMINI-STRATIVE ASSISTANCE DALLEY AND WIVES THROUGH MEDIUM OF INDEPENDENT, IMPOVERISHED CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (CRESHS), ESCHEWING FORMAL RECEPTION AT AIRPORT AND MAINTAIN MEDIA SILENCE (EMBASSY PRESS NOTICE NEVERTHELESS STIRRED MEDIA INTEREST). HOWEVER, HAITIAN AMBASSADOR TO U.S. SALOMON (WHO HAS BEEN URGING RANGEL TO

VISIT HAITI FOR MONTHS) HOSTED PREDEPARTURE DINNER, PROVIDED BRIEFING BOOK, AND SENT WIFE DOWN AS CONSTANT ESCORT AND HOST. GOH PROVIDED ENGLISH-SPEAKING MAJOR AS ADDITIONAL ESCORT. FOREIGN MINISTER BRUTUS, SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER SALVANT AND PRESIDENT RECEIVED HIM 15 JANUARY, CRESHS BRIEFED HIM ON ETHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH KEYED TO BLACK HAITI AND "HOSTED" LAVISH RECEPTION FOR HIM SAME EVENING, AND GOH SENT HIM TO CAP HAITIEN 16 JANUARY (ON SPECIAL AIRCRAFT) AND TO BEACH 17 JANUARY. EMBASSY COUNTERBALANCED WITH BRIEFING 14 JANUARY, TOUR OF COUNTRYSIDE (NEAR MIREBALAIS 15 JANUARY) AND THOROUGH BREAKFAST DISCUSSION WITH AMBASSADOR 16 JANUARY.

3. PRESIDENTIAL INTERVIEW. HIGHLIGHT OF VISIT WAS NINETY MINUTE PRIVATE INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT ASSISTED ONLY BY HAITIAN INTERPRETER, DURING WHICH PRESIDENT MADE HARD SELL -- BETTER, RANGEL SAID, THAN ANY MADE TO HIM BY STATE DEPARTMENT. PRESIDENT TOLD RANGEL HE WAS "DEEPLY MOVED" BY FIRST CONTACT WITH MEMBER OF CONGRESS WHOM HE COULD CONSIDER A "BROTHER". IN RESPONSE TO HARD SELL, RANGEL BARGAINED HARD FOR PRESIDENTIAL CONCESSIONS IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD, E.G. PROCEDURAL GUARANTEES SUCH AS ACCESS TO COUNSEL AND VISITS BY RELATIVES AS WELL AS DISCLOSURE OF TOTAL NUMBER STILL INCARCERATED, POINTING OUT THAT HE HAS "A HEAVY BURDEN WITH THE AMERICAN PRESS AND MUST HAVE HELP IN ORDER TO ASSIST IN IMPROVING HAITI'S IMAGE." PRESIDENT REPEATEDLY REFUSED TO BITE, ANSWERING ONLY THAT AMBASSADOR SALOMON WOULD CARRY OUT HIS INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING RELATIONS WITH CONGRESS AND TELLING RANGEL "YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO BE A SPOKESMAN FOR HAITI IN THE U.S." RANGEL AFTERWARDS EXPRESSED IMPLIED THAT AMBASSADOR SALOMON HAD LED HIM TO EXPECT SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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SPECIFIC RESULT FROM THE VISIT -- IMPRESSION REINFORCED BY HAITIAN INTERPRETER, WHO SAID HE HAD RARELY SEEN PRESIDENT SO ANIMATED AND PREDICTED FURTHER DECISIONS IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD.

A. HAITIAN APOLOGIA. PRESIDENT SAID MUCH U.S. CRITICISM OF HAITI IN THE PAST HAD BEEN UNJUSTIFIED. HIS FATHER HAD BEGUN HAITI'S ONLY REAL REVOLUTION TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS. NOW MAJORITY HAVE ACCESS TO EDUCATION, WHEREAS ONLY SMALL NUMBER ENJOYED EDUCATION PREVIOUSLY. PRESIDENT CHARACTERIZED HAITIAN OPPOSITION TO HIS REGIME AS INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL "MAFIA." HE STRESSED THAT HIS ACTIONS INCLUDING HIS AMNESTIES ARE EXPRESSION ONLY OF HIS INTERPRETATION OF WHAT IS GOOD FOR THE COUNTRY AND DO NOT RESPOND TO INTERNAL OR FOREIGN PRESSURES OR OPINION. HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURITY OF THE STATE AND WOULD CONTINUE TO FIGHT AGAINST THREATS TO REGIME AND TO STRUGGLE TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS. PRIORITIES ARE ROADS, PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION. "HAITI NEEDS AID BUT IT CANNOT BE OBTAINED AT THE EXPENSE OF NATIONAL SECURITY."

NOTE BY OC/T: DISSEMINATION COORDINATED WITH S/S-O - R

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B. AID. PRESIDENT EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION WITH LEVEL OF U.S. AID TO HAITI. FOR U.S., HE SAID, HAITI SEEMED TO BE "POOR RELATION", AND HE ASSERTED U.S. HAD PROVIDED PROPORTIONATELY MUCH MORE TO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, DESPITE HAITI'S BETTER RECORD OF SUPPORT FOR U.S. IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS. PRESIDENT'S PITCH ECHOED SUBSTANCE OF AMBASSADOR SALOMON'S BRIEFING BOOK FOR CONGRESSMAN RANGEL.

C. HUMAN RIGHTS. PRESIDENT SUGGESTED THROUGHOUT INTERVIEW THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHES TO BEING HIS OWN MASTER AND NEED TO AVOID APPEARING COERCED, PARTICULARLY IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD. PRESIDENT UNFAILINGLY RAISED CONSIDERATIONS OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN CONTEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS DISCUSSION, INDICATING HE WOULD NOT COMPROMISE COUNTRY'S SAFETY. HE OBJECTED, MOREOVER, TO HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS BEING MADE PRECONDITIONS FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROJECTS. FOREIGN MINISTER BRUTUS IN EARLIER INTERVIEW SET OUT SLIGHTLY MORE DIPLOMATIC POSITION WHEN HE SAID NOTHING SMACKING OF INTERVENTIONISM ON HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD BE TOLERATED "BUT WE WILL TAKE SUGGESTION FROM OUR FRIENDS" (REFERRING PARTICULARLY TO THE BLACK CAUCUS, BUT ALSO TO USG IF FORMS WERE OBSERVED). RANGEL UNSUCCESSFULLY SOUGHT INITIATION FROM PRESIDENT TO VISIT POLITICAL PRISONER DETENTION CENTERS.

4. COMMENT: VISIT OPENS UP ONE MORE CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATIONS
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WITH U.S. FOR GOH AND MAY PRESAGE CONCERTED EFFORT BY GOH (SPARKED BY SALOMON) TO FIND FRIENDS IN CONGRESS TO PROTECT IT FROM ANTICIPATED PRESSURES FROM CARTER ADMINISTRATION. CONGRESSMAN RANGEL SHOWED HIMSELF HARD BARGAINER, HOWEVER, AND HIS INSISTENCE THAT GOH SHOULD TAKE MORE EXPLICIT ACTIONS IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD IF IT EXPECTED TO OVERCOME ADVERSE PUBLIC IMAGE MUST HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTIVE. RANGEL EXPECTS TO CONTINUE HIS DIALOGUE WITH AMBASSADOR SALOMON AND SAID HE WELCOMED FURTHER CONSULTATION WITH DEPARTMENT ON ISSUES RAISED DURING HIS VISIT. FOR OUR PART, WE THINK CONGRESSMAN RANGEL CAN BE EFFECTIVE ADJUNCT TO OUR EFFORTS, PARTICULARLY IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD.

5. HARD LINE ADVANCED BY GOH ON HUMAN RIGHTS REFLECTS GENUINE CONCERN AT DANGER OF BEING PUSHED AROUND BY U.S. AND OTHERS ON THIS ISSUE. ESSENTIALLY SAME LINE ADVANCED IN ANCESTORS' DAY SPEECH 2 JANUARY (SEPTEL). IT DOES NOT IN OUR VIEW RULE OUT FUTHER LIBERALIZATION BUT MAKES CLEAR THAT GOH MUST BE SEEN TO BE ACTING ON ITS OWN INITIATIVE.

6. GOH ASSERTIONS THAT U.S. UNFAIRLY BENEFITTING DOMINICAN REPUBLIC OVER POORER HAITI IS RECURRENT AND MISLEADING THEME. WE INTEND TO RAISE WITH GOH TO PROVIDE PROPER PERSPECTIVE. ISHAM

NOTE BY OC/T: DISSEMINATION COORDINATED WITH S/S-O - MR. MACFARLANE.

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